

**(SAMPLE)**

**THE HOME FRONT (Unlimited children can participate in a performance)**

### **PRODUCTION NOTES**

The most successful production done to date has been one that used a combination of the readings and the sketches. The children made their own props, such as gas masks boxes and replica 1940's radios, and copied WW2 posters of the time which were held up by one child, while another child read a relevant "memory" or newspaper article.

Another school even had a video player and TV set up on the stage and they played excerpts from WW2 documentaries, selecting the pieces which were Government information films.

Music of the period was used in one production and also some recordings of radio broadcasts. The Imperial War Museum has an extensive range of recordings of this period on sale through its shop or catalogue. Your local audio library may have some in stock or be able to order them from another library.

Your local audio library should also have or be able to order for you any of the BBC Sound Effects tapes or CD's, which contain a variety of explosive sounds (also V1 rockets).

It is sufficient, for the readings, for children to be dressed in school uniform. However, in the sketches, children preferred to assemble some sort of costume, when playing adults. Headscarves, flat caps, knitted waistcoats, collarless shirts with braces, flowery dresses, are all simple costume ideas which give enough of a flavour of the period.

### **In conclusion...**

We hope you enjoy using The Home Front. It is our most popular piece, because of its relevance to the current National Curriculum. Teachers have said that it has proved to be a lively and informative exercise for their pupils.

## **THE HOME FRONT**

### **Readings**

#### **Section 1**

### **CHILDREN'S MEMORIES OF THE WAR**

## **THE DAY WAR BROKE OUT**

**Mr Chamberlain's broadcast was not impressive. I remembered him from the newsreels, coming out of his aeroplane after Munich, waving his little piece of paper and promising 'peace in our time.' I thought he looked like a sheep, and now he bleated like a sheep. He talked about not being sent and replies not being received. He regretted that a state of war existed between Great Britain and Germany. He sounded really hurt, like Hitler was some shiftless council tenant who had failed to pay his rent after faithfully promising to do so.**

**That wasn't the way to talk to Hitler; he should be threatening to kick his teeth in....I knew there'd be trouble....**

**There was. The sirens went immediately. We didn't know what to do. We had no shelters; nothing but little gas masks in cardboard boxes. We went to the front windows and stared out. Everything was peaceful and sunny. Old Charlie Harris, who hadn't worked for years with his bad chest, after being gassed on the Somme, was marching round the square sticking his chest out. Wearing his best suit and medals from the Last Lot. He looked determined but ridiculous. Mum said he had volunteered to be a warden yesterday, and obviously felt he should do something.**

**Dad said ' If he sounds his rattle, that means poison gas - put your gas mask on.'**

**I said 'But he hasn't got a rattle.'**

**There wasn't a cloud in the sky - let alone a German bomber. My old teddy bear was sitting in the corner. I hadn't spared him a glance in years, but now he looked at me appealingly. I put him under my bed for safety.**

**Then the all-clear sounded.**

**Charlie Brown headed straight home for a strong cup of tea.**

## **UNREALITY**

**My father got a copy of the Daily Express war map, which we hung on the kitchen wall and decorated with little coloured flags representing the Allied and German forces. It was good fun, but quite unreal - as unreal as the popular songs on the wireless.**

**We're going to hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line  
Have you any dirty washing, Mother dear?  
We're going to hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line  
For the washing day is here.**

**Whether the weather may be wet or fine,  
We will hang it out, without a care.  
We're going to hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line  
If the Siegfried Line's still there!**

## ANDERSON SHELTER

The government didn't build shelters for you. Council workmen just came with a lorry and dumped the bits on your front lawn and left you to get on with it. We didn't think much of the bits, lying out in the rain, gathering rainwater. Just thin bits of corrugated iron, like some old shed. People felt they would be safer in their houses, solid bricks and mortar. They weren't going out in the middle of the night to bury themselves in a grave.

Then my father saw an Anderson that had received a direct hit; he said there was quite a lot of it left; the house it had belonged to was just a heap of bricks.

So he and our neighbour Frank Spedding got cracking. They put me in charge of sorting and counting the bits and pieces while they dug, but I soon got down in the hole. We found old clay pipes and blackened pennies, but only from 1935. Dad said he must have had a hole in his pocket when he was gardening.

Two foot six down, we came across an earthenware pipe running right across the hole. Mr Spedding, who was a builder, said it was a field drain, from the time when our houses were fields. If we dug down through it, all the water in the field, when it rained would end up in our shelter. So they decided to stop digging.

Mr Spedding, being a builder, got all sorts of bits and pieces and we made that shelter a real home from home - we had a stout wooden door and Mr Spedding ran out an electric cable from the house so we had electric light and fire and we used to sit in armchairs making toast.

Then the man came from the council. Nothing was right for him. We couldn't have a wooden door on the shelter; a bomb would turn it into a mass of splinters and drive them through our flesh as we sat there. We could only have an old blanket over the door. We couldn't have electric light; as a bomb might cut the cable and fry us alive, if the cable touched the metal walls. Worst of all, the shelter should be three feet deep, not two foot six.

Dad told him about the field drain. Dad said he wanted a shelter, not a well for watering the roses. But the man kept waving his little steel ruler and saying that if we didn't put it three feet down, the council would come and take it away, and we could do without.

So we put it down three feet. Dad and Mr Spedding were grim-faced the whole time. Slowly, the shelter filled up with water, like a swimming pool. We did water the roses from it and, in the winter, we sheltered from air raids in the cupboard under the stairs.